Wiki Post #1 – Candide

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**Summary:** Candide is a young boy who lives in the home of Baron Thunder-ten-Tronch. His mother, the sister of the Baron, took him in when he was a child. He grows up in the home of the Baron, where he is sheltered from the rest of the world. He is taught by Pangloss, the royal educator. Pangloss instills the values of optimism in young Candide, reminding him that "everything is right", and everything happens for a reason. Candide is hopelessly in love with The Barons daughter, Cunegonde. One day, they kiss in secret and are caught. Candide is tossed out of the castle and left to fend for himself. He is picked up by two men who bring him to the Bulgarians. After narrowly escaping death by beating, the King of the Bulgarians saves Candide.

A huge war ensues between the Bulgarians and the Abarians. Candide flees the Bulgarians, afraid for his safety. He is worn and beaten, in great need of shelter. Eventually, Candide ends up under the care of a man named James, the Anabaptist. Candide references the teachers of Pangloss, noting that everything must happen for a reason because he was so fortunate as to have such good luck as to find a man so willing to extend himself to a stranger.

**Analysis:***Candide* is a humorous, fast paced adventure that definitely took me by surprise. I was expecting a dull account of philosophy, but instead was immediately thrown into a world of storytelling. The way the story is written means more than the actual words of the story itself. Whereas a typical story might focus on the content and use the method of storytelling as a assistant, Voltaire did quite the opposite with Candide. The plot is simply an accessory to the way he writes. The pace of the story creates a whimsicality that goes much deeper than the initial plot presented in the first few chapters. I am really enjoying the book thus far, and was shocked when I could not put it down.

**Application:** Although the book as yet to fully reveal itself as a whole, it is possible to see connections to the course objectives of Honors Humanities within the literature. In reference to the essential question, Voltaire maps out an inherent trait in the form of Candide: his optimistic view on the world. It is evident right from the start that Candide takes the words of his teacher Pangloss to heart, and truly believes that everything will happen for a reason. After receiving “exactly 4,000 strokes, which laid bare all his muscles and nerves from the nape of his neck to his stern”, one would expect Candide to be upset, or at least slightly disillusioned. However, he is not. The pace of the story continues on as always, never giving more attention to tragedy than it would to minor details as well. This clearly contrasts an interesting view: why should human nature remain focused on negativity? Socially, Voltaire is suggesting that society should accept life for all that it is, positive and negative. Pangloss and his explanation of the world are an example of the human ideals that seek perfection. By explaining that everything is right in the world, Pangloss is asserting that there is no such thing as an unfortunate event. We know this is not true – sometimes, less than ideal events occur. Candide’s affection for Cunegonde as it is written by Voltaire also shows the role that women have played at different points in history. Her eternal beauty, royal status and naivety all speak to her role in society. This was not always so, and has been drastically different throughout the ages. Women have been respected and feared, honored and defaced, liberated and repressed. Voltaire gives an interesting view into the specific role of women during this time in history.